



Guest Workshop Law and Diversity: Legal Categories and Identity

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Political intermediaries in the Iberian Worlds: Indigenous Communities and Religious Orders in the Americas, 16th and 17th Centuries

About the project

Our project is set in the reflection on the functioning of the multiterritorial political entities in the Early Modern Period based on the understanding of the interactions between the imperial frameworks and the local contexts. We propound a comparative study about the formulation and development of the ‘republics of Indians’ to analyse the incorporation of the indigenous communities into the political body of the Hispanic Monarchy. As it was stated in a royal law issued in 1549, these new American republics were part of the Crown plans to regulate the New World according with the Castillian municipal system. However, this only legal and institutional form led to many variations of governance across the Indies. We could explain these variations delving into the indigenous communities political life under the Spanish rule in several regions of the American domains. Especially we are interested in the transmission and improvement of concepts, notions, categories and ideas related to the exercise of power, considering different Prehispanic and European traditions and ideologies. Therefore, we pay attention to the thought and actions of the indigenous elites and the religious orders to formulate a reflection about the mediation as cornerstone of the modern politics.

Our research involves a wide tipology of primary sources, kept in European and American archives and libraries. On one hand, we will take in account the literary outputs of the men who made the spiritual conquest, looking for reconstructing their individual and collective ideas and plans about the governance of the Indies, in accordance or not with the model spread from the Crown. On the other, we analysis sources originated in the local sphere: by the cabildos of Indians and by the local courts, as well as in the higher levels of the royal



administration: by the royal officials and by the King and his representatives; and sources that were created by the indigenous elites with a personal or familiar sense.

Our analysis is mainly made from the Political History and the Cultural History, expecting to be a critical contribution for the methodological reflections about the comparative and transnational perspectives, and about the concepts and categories that are used to analyse the First Modernity in a historiographical context influenced by the elements that define the world today: circulation, multiculturalism and multicentrism.